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The Star

Jg..... Nr..... P 3 Dat. 20.3.1997

Celebrities to join Mandela for banquet on Robben Island

By ANSO THOM
Political Reporter

President Mandela will be joined by a star-studded line-up when he docks at Robben Island tonight for a gala banquet attended by, among others, US actor and comedian Bill Cosby, songwriter and singer Quincy Jones, United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan and US first lady Hillary Clinton.

Although the guest list, with selected diners paying R250 000 per couple, has been kept under wraps, it is believed that top South African businessmen as well as reigning Miss South Africa Peggy-Sue Khumalo will attend.

Proceeds will help struggling former political prisoners and with the establishment of the

Robben Island museum.

Mandela would escort Clinton to the island this afternoon, presidential spokesman Joel Netshitenzhe said. Between 70 and 80 guests, not all paying, were expected to attend.

The island museum and political prisoners' fund was launched by Mandela in October, after a reunion of former political prisoners showed that many had fallen on hard times and were living on meagre incomes.

Netshitenzhe said the majority of guests would be paying and that Princess Diana's Cape Town visit had unfortunately ended prior to the banquet date.

"Most of the celebrities were visiting anyway; the bash wasn't organised around them coming," he said.

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